

First record of Blue Quail *Coturnix adansonii* for Swaziland

Philip Perry

Première mention de la Caille bleue *Coturnix adansonii* pour le Swaziland. Une Caille bleue *Coturnix adansonii* mâle a été capturée et tuée par un chat à Thembelihle, Mbabane, le 5 mars 2006. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le Swaziland de cette espèce, qui est devenue rare en Afrique australe.



Figure 1. Adult male Blue Quail *Coturnix adansonii*, Mbabane, 5 March 2006 (P. Perry)

Caille bleue *Coturnix adansonii*, mâle adulte, Mbabane, 5 mars 2006 (P. Perry)

On 5 March 2006, at c.06.30 am, my cat brought a dead bird to my house, in Mbabane's northern Thembelihle suburb, Swaziland (26°17'S 31°08'E). A quick glance suggested that it was not one of the usual prey species (doves, robin chats, sunbirds), but a quail or buttonquail. The bird was probably caught in the area below my house where there is a small valley leading to a stream and a small relict pocket of damp montane grassland (altitude c.1,130 m) surrounded by suburban housing and alien trees (pines *Pinus* sp. and eucalypts *Eucalyptus* sp.).

Reference to field guides (Sinclair *et al.* 1993, Hockey *et al.* 2005) identified the bird as an adult male Blue Quail *Coturnix adansonii*. The entire body was a dark slate blue, with distinctive chestnut wing-patches and flanks (which distinguish *C. adansonii* from the Asian Blue-breasted Quail *C. chinensis* with which it is sometimes considered conspecific). It had a well-defined, broad black anchor-like marking on a white throat and a nar-

row white line from the base of the bill to the eye. The legs were bright orange-yellow (Fig. 1).

The illustrations in Sinclair *et al.* (1993) and Hockey *et al.* (2005) are somewhat inaccurate as they show the male as having a partially brown or all-brown head and back, but these are actually dark slate blue. The former work also does not show the white line from the bill to the eye. The illustration in Urban *et al.* (1986) is more accurate in these respects.

This record is the first for Swaziland: the species is not mentioned for the country by Hockey *et al.* (2005), nor does it feature on Swaziland's most recent checklist, published online in January 2006 (Monadjem 2006). Blue Quail is a rare summer visitor to southern Africa. The most recent record for South Africa included in Hockey *et al.* (2005) is of a bird found dead in Durban in December 1973, but since then a male was observed in the northern Kruger National Park, near Shingwedzi, on 11 April 2004 (Demey

2004). The nearest record of this species to Mbabane is a specimen collected in Manhiça (25°24'S 32°48'E), c.50 km north of Maputo, southern Mozambique (Clancey 1996).

Acknowledgements

I thank Dr Ara Monadjem and Ron Demey for their useful comments on a draft of this note.

References

- Clancey, P. A. 1996. *The Birds of Southern Mozambique*. Westville, KwaZulu-Natal: African Bird Book Publishing.
- Demey, R. 2004. Recent Reports. *Bull. ABC* 11: 168–182.

Hockey, P. A. R., Dean, W. R. J. & Ryan, P. G. 2005. *Roberts Birds of Southern Africa*. Seventh edn. Cape Town: Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund.

Monadjem, A. 2006. List of the birds of Swaziland. www.naturalhistorysociety.org.sz/Birds.htm

Sinclair, I., Hockey, P. A. R. & Tarboton, W. 1993. *Sasol Birds of Southern Africa*. Cape Town: Struik.

Urban, E. K., Fry, C. H. & Keith, S. (eds.) 1986. *The Birds of Africa*. Vol. 2. London, UK: Academic Press.

PO Box 5141, Mbabane, H100, Swaziland. E-mail: phil@pperrywildlifephotos.org.sz

Received 18 April 2006; revision accepted 23 April 2006

Wildwings

order your 2007 brochure now!

**Birdwatching Holidays
and the best choice of
Wildlife Cruises 2007**

brochureline: 0117 9375 689
info & bookings: 0117 9658 333
email: wildinfo@wildwings.co.uk

www.wildwings.co.uk